



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

January 5, 2005

Press Release

USCIS Statement Regarding Adoption of Tsunami Orphans

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services joins people around the world in expressing condolence to the thousands who have experienced incredible devastation from the recent earthquake and tsunami that affected a number of countries in the Indian Ocean region. Americans have reacted to the catastrophic events in many generous ways, and some have offered to open their homes, via adoption, to children who have survived the natural disasters. While these good intentions are commendable, this is not the recommended solution, at least in the short term.

The international standard among adoption professionals in a crisis is to keep children as close to their family members and community as possible. It is often difficult to determine whether children whose parents are missing are truly orphans. In the current situation, many children have become separated from one or both of their parents whose fate is unknown. Even when children are indeed orphaned, they are often taken in by other relatives. Staying with relatives in extended family units is generally a better solution than uprooting the child completely. Also, in the immediate aftermath of such disasters, a country's government may be in disarray and what resources are available may be deployed on recovery projects.

USCIS believes that it will take many months before the countries affected by the disaster will be able to identify the children who are actual orphans. It is only if and when these countries decide to make these orphans available for international adoption that American citizens will be able to begin adoption proceedings for those children who also qualify as orphans as defined in the Immigration and Nationality Act.

Additional information regarding the process of inter-country adoptions by U.S. citizens can be found at:

<http://uscis.gov/graphics/services/index2.htm>

Additional information regarding specific rules and laws governing international adoption from some of the affected countries may be found at the Department of State web links below:

India

http://travel.state.gov/family/adoption/country/country_398.html

(more)

Thailand

http://travel.state.gov/family/adoption/country/country_337.html

Indonesia

<http://www.usembassyjakarta.org/consular/adopting.html>

Sri Lanka

http://travel.state.gov/family/adoption/country/country_325.html

Malaysia

http://travel.state.gov/family/adoption/country/country_418.html

Bangladesh

http://travel.state.gov/family/adoption/country/country_334.html

Kenya

http://travel.state.gov/family/adoption/country/country_409.html

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